

Horned God

The **Horned God** is one of the two primary deities found in the pagan religion of Wicca. He is often given various names and epithets, and represents the male part of the religion's duotheistic theological system, the other part being the female Triple Goddess. In common Wiccan belief, he is associated with nature, wilderness, sexuality, hunting and the life cycle.^{[1] :32-34} Whilst depictions of the deity vary, he is always shown with either horns or antlers upon his head, often depicted as being theriocephalic, in this way emphasizing "the union of the divine and the animal", the latter of which includes humanity.^{[2] :11}

The term *Horned God* itself predates Wicca, and is an early 20th century syncretic term for a horned or antlered anthropomorphic god with pseudohistorical origins^[3] who, according to Margaret Murray's 1921 *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*, was the deity worshipped by a pan-European witchcraft-based cult, and was demonized into the form of the Devil by the Mediaeval Church.

The Horned God has been explored within several psychological theories, and it has also become a recurrent theme in fantasy literature since the 20th Century.^{[4] :872}



A sculpture of the Horned God of Wicca found in the Museum of Witchcraft in Boscastle, Cornwall.

Horned God of Wicca

In traditional and mainstream Wicca, the Horned God is viewed as the masculine side of divinity, being both equal and opposite to the Goddess. The Wiccan god himself can be represented in many forms, including as the Sun God, the Sacrificed God and the Vegetation God,^[1] although the Horned God is the most popular representation, having been worshipped by early Wiccan groups such as the New Forest coven during the 1930s. The pioneers of the various different Wiccan or Witchcraft traditions, such as Gerald Gardner, Doreen Valiente and Robert Cochrane, all claimed that their religion was a continuation of the pagan religion of the Witch-Cult following historians who had purported the Witch-Cult's existence, such as Jules Michelet and Margaret Murray.

For Wiccans, the Horned God is "the personification of the life force energy in animals and the wild"^[5] and is associated with the wilderness, virility and the hunt.^{[6] :16} Doreen Valiente writes that the Horned God also carries the souls of the dead to the underworld.^[7]

Wiccans generally, as well as some other neopagans, tend to conceive of the universe as polarized into gender opposites of male and female energies. In traditional Wicca, the Horned God and the Goddess are seen as equal and opposite in gender polarity. However, in some of the newer trads of Wicca, and especially those influenced by feminist ideology, there is more emphasis on the Goddess, and consequently the symbolism of the Horned God is less developed than that of the Goddess.^{[8] :154} In Wicca the cycle of the seasons is celebrated during eight sabbats called The Wheel of the Year. The seasonal cycle is imagined to follow the relationship between the Horned God and the Goddess.^[6] The Horned God is born in winter, impregnates the Goddess and then dies during the autumn and winter months and is then reborn by the Goddess at Yule.^[9] The different relationships throughout the year are sometimes distinguished by splitting the god into aspects, the Oak King and the Holly King.^[6] The relationships between the Goddess and the Horned God are mirrored by Wiccans in seasonal rituals. There is some variation between Wiccan groups as to which sabbat corresponds to which part of the cycle. Some Wiccans regard the Horned God as dying at Lammas, August 1; also known as Lughnasadh, which is the first harvest sabbat. Others may see

him dying at Mabon, the autumn equinox, or the second harvest festival. Still other Wiccans conceive of the Horned God dying on October 31, which Wiccans call Samhain, the ritual of which is focused on death. He is then reborn on Winter Solstice, December 21.^{[10] :190}

Other important dates for the Horned God include Imbolc when, according to Valiente, he leads a wild hunt.^{[7] :191} In Gardnerian Wicca, the Dryghten prayer is recited at the end of every ritual meeting contains the lines referring to the Horned God:

“In the name of the Lady of the Moon, and the Horned Lord of Death and Resurrection”^[11]

According to Sabina Magliocco^{[11] :28}, Gerald Gardner says (in 1959's *The Meaning of Witchcraft*) that The Horned God is an Under-god, a mediator between an unknowable supreme deity and the people. (In Wiccan liturgy in the Book of Shadows, this conception of an unknowable supreme deity is referred to as "Dryghtyn." It is not a personal god, but rather an impersonal divinity similar to the Tao of Taoism.)

Whilst the Horned God is the most common depiction of masculine divinity in Wicca, he is not the only representation. Other examples include the Green Man and the Sun God.^[1] In traditional Wicca, however, these other representations of the Wiccan god are subsumed or amalgamated into the Horned God, as aspects or expressions of him. Sometimes this is shown by adding horns or antlers to the iconography. The Green Man, for example, may be shown with branches resembling antlers; and the Sun God may be depicted with a crown or halo of solar rays, that may resemble horns. These other conceptions of the Wiccan god should not be regarded as displacing the Horned God, but rather as elaborating on various facets of his nature. Doreen Valiente has called the Horned God "the eldest of gods" in both *The Witches Creed* and also in her *Invocation To The Horned God*.

Wiccans believe that The Horned God, as Lord of Death, is their "comforter and consoler" after death and before reincarnation; and that he rules the Underworld or Summerland where the souls of the dead reside as they await rebirth. Some, such as Joanne Pearson, believes that this is based on the Mesopotamian myth of Innana's decent into hell, though this has not been confirmed.^{[12] :147}

Names of the Horned God

The Horned God is given different names and epithets by different Wiccan groups and traditions. Epithets for the Horned God include **The Lord** and **the Old One**. Another term used is **Old Horny**, in reference to the deity's horns and also to his sexual nature.^{[13] :5}

Doreen Valiente, a former High Priestess of the Gardnerian tradition, claimed that Gerald Gardner's Bricket Wood coven referred to the god as Cernunnos, or **Kernunno**, which is a Gallo-Celtic word meaning "the Horned One". Valiente claimed that the coven also referred to the god as **Janicot** (pronounced Jan-e-co), which she theorised was of Basque origin, and Gardner also used this name in his novel *High Magic's Aid*.^{[14] :52-53}

Stewart Farrar, a High Priest of the Alexandrian tradition referred to the Horned God as **Karnayna**, which he believed was a corruption of the word Cernunnos.^[15] The historian Ronald Hutton has suggested that it instead came from the Arabic term Dhul-Qarnayn which meant "Horned One". This term had been used in the Qur'an to refer to Cyrus the Great or alternatively Alexander the Great, who considered himself the son of the horned deity Ammon-Zeus, and wore horns as a part of his regalia. Margaret Murray had mentioned this information in her 1933 book *The God of the Witches*, and Hutton theorised that Alex Sanders had taken it from there, enjoying the fact that he shared his name with the ancient Macedonian emperor.^{[16] :331}

In the writings of Charles Cardell and Raymond Howard, the god was referred to as **Atho**. Howard had a wooden statue of Atho's head which he claimed was 2200 years old, but the statue was stolen in April 1967. Howard's son later admitted that his father had carved the statue himself.^[17]

In Cochrane's Craft, which was founded by Robert Cochrane, the Horned God was often referred to by a Biblical name; Tubal-cain, who, according to the Bible was the first blacksmith.^[18] In this neopagan concept, the god is also referred to as Bran, a Welsh mythological figure, Wayland, the smith in Germanic mythology, and Herne, a horned figure from English folklore.^[18]

In the neopagan tradition of Stregheria, founded by Raven Grimassi and based on the works of Charles Godfrey Leland, the Horned God goes by several names, including Dianus, Faunus, Cern, and Actaeon.

Horned God in psychology

Jungian analysis

Sherry Salman considers the image of the Horned God in Jungian terms, as an archetypal protector and mediator of the outside world to the objective psyche. In her theory the male psyche's 'Horned God' frequently compensates for inadequate fathering.

When first encountered, the figure is a dangerous, 'hairy chthonic wildman' possessed of kindness and intelligence. If repressed, later in life The Horned God appears as the lord of the Otherworld, or Hades. If split off entirely, he leads to violence, substance abuse and sexual perversion. When integrated he gives the male an ego 'in possession of its own destructiveness' and for the female psyche gives an effective animus relating to both the physical body and the psyche.^[19]

In considering the Horned God as a symbol recurring in women's literature, Richard Sugg suggests the Horned God represents the 'natural Eros', a masculine lover subjugating the social-conformist nature of the female shadow, thus encompassing a combination of the shadow and animus. One such example is Heathcliff from Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*. Sugg goes on to note that female characters who are paired with this character usually end up socially ostracised, or worse - in an inverted ending to the male hero-story.^[20] :162

Humanistic psychology

Following the work of Robert Bly in the Mythopoetic men's movement, John Rowan proposes the Horned God as a "Wild Man" be used as a fantasy image or 'sub-personality'^[21] :38 helpful to men in humanistic psychology, and escaping from 'narrow societal images of masculinity'^[22] :249 encompassing deference to women and paraphillia.^[22] :57-57

Theories of historical origins

Several theories have been created to establish historical roots for the worship of a Horned God.

Margaret Murray

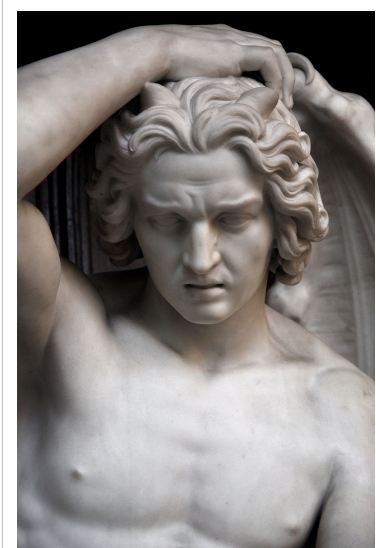
Following the writings of suffragist Matilda Joslyn Gage^[23] and others, Margaret Murray, in her 1921 book *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*, proposed the theory that the witches of the early-modern period were remnants of a pagan cult and that the Christian Church had declared the god of the witches was in fact the Devil. Without specific recourse to any specific representation of this deity Murray speculates that the head coverings common in inquisition-derived descriptions of the devil 'may throw light on one of the possible origins of the cult'.^[24]



Bronze figurine of a "Horned God" from Enkomi, Cyprus

In 1931 Murray published a sequel, *The God of the Witches*, which tries to gather evidence in support of her witch-cult theory. In Chapter 1 "The Horned God".^[25] Murray attempts to claim that various depictions of humans with horns from European and Indian sources, ranging from the paleolithic French cave painting of "The Sorcerer" to the Indic Pashupati to the modern English Dorset Ooser, are evidence for an unbroken, Europe-wide tradition of worship of a singular Horned God. Murray derived this model of a horned god cult from James Frazer and Jules Michelet.^[26] :36

In dealing with "The Sorcerer",^[24] :23-4 the earliest evidence claimed, Murray based her observations on an drawing by Henri Breuil, which modern scholars such as Ronald Hutton claim is inaccurate. Hutton states that modern photographs show the original cave art lacks horns, a human torso or any other significant detail on its upper half. Breuil considered his drawing to represent a shaman or magician - an interpretation which gives the image its name. Murray having seen the drawing called Breuil's image 'the first depiction of a deity', an idea which Breuil and others later adopted. Hutton's theory led him to conclude that reliance on Breuil's initial sketch resulted in many later scholars erroneously claiming that "The Sorcerer" was evidence that the concept of a Horned God dated back to Paleolithic times^[27] :34



Lucifer (Le génie du mal) by Guillaume Geefs (Cathedral of St. Paul, Liège, Belgium)

Murray also used an inaccurate drawing of a mesolithic rock-painting at Cogul in northeast Spain as evidence of group religious ceremony of the cult, although the central male figure is not horned.^[24] :65 The illustration she used of the Cogul painting leaves out a number of figures, human and animal, and the original is more likely a sequence of superimposed but unrelated illustrations, rather than a depiction of a single scene.^[16] :197

The idea of a historical Horned God cult is widely regarded as being a fantasy. Despite widespread condemnation of her scholarship some minor aspects of her work continued to have supporters.^[28] :9[29]

Influences from literature

The popular image of the Greek god Pan was removed from its classical context in the writings of the Romantics of the 18th century and connected with their ideals of a pastoral England. This, along with the general public's increasing lack of familiarity of Greek mythology at the time led to the figure of Pan becoming generalised as a 'horned god', and applying connotations to the character, such as benevolence that were not evident in the original Greek myths which in turn gave rise to the popular acceptance of Murray's hypothetical horned god of the witches.^[16]

The reception of *Aradia* amongst Neopagans has not been entirely positive. Clifton suggests that modern claims of revealing an Italian pagan witchcraft tradition, for example those of Leo Martello and Raven Grimassi, must be "match[ed] against", and compared with the claims in *Aradia*. He further suggests that a lack of comfort with *Aradia* may be due to an "insecurity" within Neopaganism about the movement's claim to authenticity as a religious revival.^[30] :61 Valiente offers another explanation for the negative reaction of some neopagans; that the identification of Lucifer as the god of the witches in *Aradia* was "too strong meat" for Wiccans who were used to the gentler, romantic paganism of Gerald Gardner and were especially quick to reject any relationship between witchcraft and Satanism.^[31]

In 1985 Classical historian Georg Luck, in his *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, theorised that the origins of the Witch-cult may have appeared in late antiquity as a faith primarily designed to worship the Horned God, stemming from the merging of Cernunnos, a horned god of the Celts, with the Greco-Roman Pan/Faunus,^[32] :6-7 a combination of gods which he posits created a new deity, around which the

remaining pagans, those refusing to convert to Christianity, rallied and that this deity provided the prototype for later Christian conceptions of the Devil, and his worshippers were cast by the Church as witches.^[32]

Influences from occultism

Eliphas Levi's image of "Baphomet" serves as an example of the transformation of the Devil into a benevolent fertility deity and provided the prototype for Murray's horned god.^[33] Murray's central thesis that images of the Devil were actually of deities and that Christianity had demonised these worshippers as following Satan, is first recorded in the work of Levi in the fashionable 19th-century Occultist circles of England and France.^[33] Levi created his image of Baphomet, published in his *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* (1855), by combining symbolism from diverse traditions, including the *Diable* card of the 16th and 17th century Tarot of Marseille.



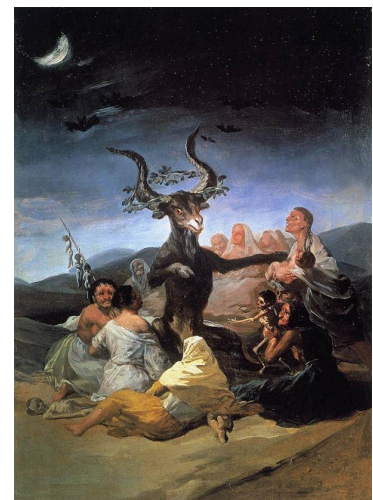
The 19th century image of a Sabbatic Goat, created by Eliphas Lévi. Baphomet serves as a historical model for Murray's concept.

Gerald Gardner and Wicca

Margaret Murray's theory of the historical origins of the Horned God has been used by Wiccans to create a myth of historical origins for their religion.^[6] :110 There is no real evidence to support claims that the religion originates earlier than the mid-20th century.^[16]

Modern scholarship has disproved Margaret Murray's theory, however various different horned gods and mother goddesses were indeed worshipped in the British Isles during the ancient and early Medieval periods.^[34]

The "father of Wicca", Gerald Gardner, who adopted Margaret Murray's thesis, claimed Wicca was a modern survival of an ancient pan-European pagan religion.^[35] Gardner states that he had reconstructed elements of the religion from fragments, incorporating elements from Freemasonry, the Occult, and Theosophy, which came together in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, where Gardner met Aleister Crowley, whose influence became the basis for Wiccan magical practices.^[36] :27 Gerald Gardner was initiated into the O.T.O. by Aleister Crowley and subsequently went on to found the Neopagan religion of Wicca. Various scholars on early Wiccan history, such as Ronald Hutton, Philip Heselton, and Leo Ruickbie concur that witchcraft's early rituals, as devised by Gardner, contained much from Crowley's writings such as the Gnostic Mass. The third degree initiation ceremony in Gardnerian Wicca (including the Great Rite) is derived almost completely from the Gnostic Mass.^[37]



Francisco de Goya's *Witches Sabbath* (1789), which depicts the Devil flanked by Satanic witches. The Witch Cult hypothesis states that such stories are based upon a real-life pagan cult that revered a horned god

Romano-Celtic fusion

Georg Luck, repeats part of Murray's theory, stating that the Horned God may have appeared in late antiquity, stemming from the merging of Cernunnos, a horned god of the Celts, with the Greco-Roman Pan/Faunus,^[32] a combination of gods which he posits created a new deity, around which the remaining pagans, those refusing to convert to Christianity, rallied and that this deity provided the prototype for later Christian conceptions of the devil, and his worshippers were cast by the Church as witches.^[32]

Fantasy and science fiction

In 1908's *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame, in Chapter 7, "The Piper at the Gates of Dawn", Ratty and Mole meet a mystical horned being, powerful, fearsome and kind.^{[30] :85} Grahame's work was a significant part of the cultural milieu which stripped the Greek god Pan of his cultural identity in favour of an unnamed, generic horned deity which led to Murray's thesis of historical origins.

Outside of works that predate the publication of Murray's thesis, horned god motifs and characters appear in fantasy literature that draws upon her work and that of her followers.

In the novel *Childhood's End* (1953) by Arthur C. Clarke, all humans have a collective premonition, also described as a memory of the future, of horned aliens which arrive to usher in a new phase of human evolution. The collective subconscious image of the horned aliens is what accounts for mankind's image of the devil or Satan.

In the critically acclaimed and influential 1950s TV series created by Nigel Kneale, *Quatermass and the Pit*, depictions of supernatural horned entities, with specific reference to prehistoric cave-art and shamanistic horned head-dress are revealed to be a "race-memory" of psychic Martian grasshoppers, manifested at the climax of the film by a fiery horned god.^{[38] :244}

Murray's theories has been seen to have had influence on *Blood on Satan's Claw* (1971), where a murderous female-led cult worships a horned deity named Behemoth.^{[39] :94}

Marion Zimmer Bradley, who acknowledges the influence of Murray, uses the figure of the "horned god" in her feminist fantasy transformation of Arthurian myth, *Mists of Avalon* (1984), and portrays ritualistic incest between King Arthur as the representative of the horned god and his sister Morgaine as the "spring maiden".^{[40] :106}

Also, in the popular video game *Morrowind*, its expansion *Bloodmoon* has a plot enemy known as Hircine, the Daedric god of the Hunt, who appears as a horned man with the face of a deer skull. He condemned his "hounds" (werewolves) to walk the mortal ground during the Bloodmoon until a champion defeats him or Bloodmoon falls. He also appears as a horned wolf or bear when in combat.

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